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SUBJECT: GBAGBO ROCKING THE BOAT; OPPOSITION STICKS TOE IN THE WATER

11. (U) After a tumultuous week in the political landscape with Gbagbo's takeover of both the State-owned newspaper Fraternite Matin and state Radio and Television (RTI), and his reinstatement of three senior officials who were implicated in the toxic waste disaster but are Gbagbo cronies, this week Ivoirian opposition groups tried to rally their supporters and take the conflict to the streets. However, they were successful in mounting only relatively small, disparate and muted street protests in Abidjan. On Monday, December 4, the youth wing of the Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) called their followers into the streets, vowing to make Abidjan a "dead city" ("ville morte"), but without significant success. There were confirmed reports of opposition supporters assembling on the streets of Treichville and Marcory sectors and reports of two buses burning in Koumassi and shooting and tear gas use in Zone 4. There were no reported deaths or injuries in Abidjan. The security and defense forces, responding rapidly, prevented them from causing serious disruptions and by mid-morning Abidjan was quiet.

12. (U) Opposition groups have managed more successful demonstrations outside of Abidjan. Last week small demonstrations protesting the decrees were staged in several cities and resulted in numerous people being wounded and two killed in Toumodi. Youth leaders of the RHDP say this is only the beginning and are giving President Gbagbo until next Thursday to rescind his recent decrees concerning RTI otherwise they threaten to incite protests until Gbagbo resigns. It remains to be seen how many people they are able to get in the streets.

Hooks